

Four ex-Blues at Sutton

WYCOMBE Wanderers meet up with four former team-mates when they travel to Sutton United tomorrow (Saturday) for what will be one of their most difficult Isthmian League Premier Division games so far.

The ex-Wanderers are Larry Pritchard, who rejoined Sutton four years ago and this season's newcomers John Delaney, Steve Hill and Gavin Fraser. Another former Wycombe player, Keith Blunt, is now United's manager.

Sutton are unbeaten since Blunt took over at Gander Green Lane, having won 4-1 at Tilbury and 1-0 at home to Leytonstone. The other games against Slough and Hayes ended in 1-1 and goalless draws respectively.

Although Sutton, like Wanderers, have problems up

front, the new players have fitted in well and Delaney has established a useful partnership with John Rains at the back. Peter Mills, formerly with Dulwich Hamlet, plays in midfield with Pritchard and Fraser.

Wanderers manager John Reardon will make a late choice on his goalkeeper but is unlikely to change the team that beat Hendon on Tuesday night. Alan Phillips is slightly doubtful with a groin strain.

Wycombe increased their squad to 16 this week when they signed defender Steve Vass from Loughborough College. Steve played in two friendlies at the end of last season and was also in the touring party to Italy in the summer.

ISTHMIAN LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION (Up to Inc. 30/8/77)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barking	4	3	0	1	8	4	9
Dagenham	4	3	0	1	10	6	9
Enfield	4	3	0	1	7	3	9
Tooting	4	3	0	1	5	3	9
Hitchin	4	2	2	0	8	3	8
Kingston	4	2	2	0	5	1	8
L'head	4	2	2	0	8	3	8
Staines	4	2	1	1	8	6	7
Sutton	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Carlton	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Wycombe	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
W'stow	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Hayes	4	2	1	1	2	1	7
L'stone	4	1	1	2	4	4	4
Southall	4	1	1	2	4	5	4
Tilbury	4	1	1	2	5	8	4
Boreham W	4	1	1	2	5	9	4
Slough	4	0	2	2	2	5	2
Hendon	4	0	1	3	2	8	1
Croydon	4	0	0	4	4	10	0
Bishops	4	0	0	4	4	10	0
Woking	4	0	0	4	3	11	0

£200 raised

WYCOMBE Wanderers and Marlow Football Clubs raised over £200 each from their sponsored walk on Sunday.

Sutton United 1, Wycombe Wanderers 0 REPORT BY STUART EARP

A 22ND minute goal by centre back John Rains sent Wycombe Wanderers tumbling to their second Isthmian League Premier Division defeat of the season when they visited Sutton on Saturday.

Compared with the many memorable Sutton v Wycombe clashes of the past, this game was one of the poorest and emphasised the gradual decline in standard throughout the league — a decline that is unlikely to be halted until younger players begin to make an impact at this level.

For Wanderers it was not just the result that was disappointing, but their overall performance, which was well below par. They looked streets ahead of the home side for the first 20 minutes but then allowed Sutton to come back and dominate the rest of the match.

There were few moments of skill we have associated with these two clubs and for the most part the game was scrappy and unco-ordinated.

Wycombe's frustrations once again spread from the front where the decision to move Howard Kennedy further upfield failed to trouble the home defence. There were chances to score but again it was the opposition who gave the lesson in finishing.

EARLY GOALS

Wanderers have yet to score first in any of their five matches this season and have shown plenty of character in coming back from behind against Croydon, Leatherhead and Hendon. If only the forwards could bang in a couple of early goals it would relieve the pressure all round and allow the players to relax.

Once they can get a commanding victory under their belts, the confidence should be raised considerably but at the moment the Blues are finding the going tough.

Facing four former Wycombe players — John Delaney, Steve Hill, Gavin Fraser and the ageless Larry Pritchard — Wycombe had their best spell in the opening stages.

Sutton, managed by another ex-Wanderer in Keith Blunt, couldn't get their game together and Mick Hollifield might have scored after seven minutes when running onto Tony Horseman's

pass. Goalkeeper Rick Collier failed to hold the shot but a defender cleared at the expense of a corner. Dylan Evans and Graham Mackenzie also went close and Horseman might have opened the account if his control hadn't let him down at a vital moment when Collier and Rains got in each other's way.

Sutton took the lead with only their second attack of the game. A long cross from Fraser's left foot found Rains at the far post and he nodded the ball slowly over the top of the defence and keeper Peter Spittle, who rightly complained about the poor marking.

BEST HOPE

Wycombe's best hope of a reply came from corners which Hollifield drilled to the near post for Horseman to flick on. Twice Keith Mead was only inches away from the vital touch. Elsewhere, however, Wycombe

made little impression on the Sutton defence where Delaney was a commanding figure in the air. Kennedy, who tired badly in the second half, could not make an impact while Horseman and Evans were given a patchy service from midfield.

Neat one-touch moves from Sutton ended the first 45 minutes and after another useful start to the new half, Wycombe lapsed again.

Kennedy should have made more of a chance after 48 minutes when Evans put him through but he took too long in shooting and five minutes later Horseman cashed in on a rare Delaney error but hit the side netting from 15 yards.

Wanderers almost presented Sutton with a gift second goal when Spittle's short goal-kick to Davies put pressure on the full back who was robbed by Tony Roberts. Only Mead's brave interception saved the day

and Keith was injured in making the clearance which later saw him leaving the field to allow Steve Vass his first taste of Isthmian football.

Before he left, Mead struck the crossbar with a curling drive after a corner but the flag was up for offside. Apart from that scare, Collier had little to worry about in a poor second half which saw Sutton take control without ever making full use of their advantage.

Vass had a useful 15 minutes at left back, Davies switching to the middle when Mead hobbled off, but Wanderers were unable to put any pressure on the home side who nevertheless were glad to hear the final whistle which signalled a repeat result of last year's game at Gander Green Lane.

SUTTON: R. Collier; R. Wyatt, J. Rains, J. Delaney, S. Bangs; G. Fraser, L. Pritchard, P. Mills (sub P. McKinnon 69 mins); R. Kidd, S. Hill, A. Roberts.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, (sub S. Vass 76 mins), A. Phillips, R. Davies; G. Mackenzie, J. Priestley, M. Hollifield; H. Kennedy, D. Evans, A. Horseman.

Referee: D. Cullen (Watford).

Half-time: 1-0. Goalscorer, Sutton: Rains (22).

BLUES MAY MISS MEAD

KEITH MEAD, Wycombe Wanderers' consistent central defender, is rated as only 50-50 for tonight's (Tuesday) Isthmian League Premier Division match against Southall at Loakes Park. Keith injured his ankle against Sutton on Saturday.

Should Mead not play, manager John Reardon will bring in Steve Vass to left back and switch Bob Davies into the middle of the back four. With Glynn Brown and Steve Pratt on holiday, the Blues are unlikely to change the side that lost 1-0 at Sutton, although John Maskell may return in goal.

Wanderers' reverse on Saturday leaves them in 12th position in the table while Southall are 15th. In their four league games to date they have beaten Croydon 3-1 at home, lost 3-0 at Kingstonian and 1-0 at home to Hayes and held Slough Town 0-0 at Wexham Park.

On Saturday, Southall crashed to their heaviest defeat of the season when

they were thrashed 4-0 at Harwich and Parkston in the FA Cup. Harwich play in Division One of the Isthmian League.

Southall have retained most of last season's players and include two newcomers in Nicky Laws and Gary Hibbs. Two players have come up through the club's youth team this season — Derek Doyle and Dean Oakley.

One man who is unlikely to play is striker Derek Harris, who is currently on

the transfer list. Derek spent a half a season with Wanderers three years ago.

ISTHMIAN LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barking	5	4	0	1	10	4	12
Dagenham	5	4	0	1	14	9	12
Enfield	5	4	0	1	9	4	12
Tooting	5	4	0	1	10	5	12
Sutton	5	3	2	0	7	2	11
Hitchin	5	3	1	1	5	3	10
Leatherhead	5	2	3	0	6	2	9
Kingstonian	4	2	2	0	8	3	8
Staines	4	2	2	0	8	3	8
Carshalton	5	2	2	1	8	6	8
Walslow	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Wycombe	5	2	1	2	5	5	7
Hayes	5	2	1	2	4	4	7
Ley'stone	4	1	1	2	4	4	4
Southall	4	1	1	2	3	5	4
Tilbury	4	1	1	2	5	8	4
Boreham W	5	1	0	4	5	11	3
Slough	4	0	2	2	2	5	2
Hendon	5	0	2	3	3	9	2
Croydon	5	0	0	5	4	11	0
Woking	4	0	0	4	3	11	0
Bishops	5	0	0	5	6	14	0